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## ADDRESS OF PRESIDENT HARDING

AT THE

JOINT BANQUET OF THE CONVENTIONS OF POSTAL ASSOCIATIONS

THE NEW WILLARD, WASHINGTON, D. C., OCTOBER 13, 1921.

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MR. TOASTMASTER, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN OF THE CONVENTION,  
OUR GUESTS: It is very gratifying to have your cordial greeting. It has been more than delightful to me to sit at the table during your postprandial feast and listen to the addresses and share with you a little wider understanding of our obligations to one another and our common obligations to the American people.

Postmaster General Hays did not give me any new picture concerning you. I enjoyed his cross-section discussion. I was thinking of yesterday as you called upon me, but bless you I knew about postmasters before I came to the Presidency. I used to help pick them in the good old days. [Laughter and applause.] I am not sure but I named more of them 20 years ago than I do to-day. [Laughter.] And I thought, while Mrs. Harding and I were enjoying your call yesterday, how truly representative you were of the varied communities in American life. I suppose I am just a little partial to the great rural community, because I began my life there, and I never knew much of the great city except by occasional observation; and I know the steadiness of the great current of thought in the rural life of America, and to-day there came to me an application of it.

It was the fortune of the Postmaster General and myself and some others to be the guests of one of your guests of the evening, Mr. Curtis, on his yacht, and I saw for the first time in my life a gyroscopic stabilizer, an invention that is designed to steady a ship in a rough sea. Mr. Curtis told me that this wonderful device had the effect of reducing the roll from  $16^{\circ}$  to about  $3^{\circ}$ , making the yacht very steady and comfortable in a storm. I don't know just why it came to me at the moment, but somehow or other there came the thought that those who speak for the great rank and file throughout America in the rural sections are the stabilizers of the American Republic. [Applause.] I mean no disparagement of the great cities. I am just as proud of the great cities of America as any citizen of the Republic. We would not be the America we are with-

out them, but they are just a little different; they are more ephemeral in their passions; they show a little more of the passing whims, but out over the broad areas of this wonderful land of ours is that thoughtful, steady, sturdy citizenship that is unmoved by the passing storms, and it constitutes, in my humble judgment, a guaranty of the perpetuity of this wonderful land of ours. [Applause.]

If I may speak of it now, because it is in my heart to say it, I like the thought advanced by Mr. Smith just now. Of course it is going to be difficult for any President to say in advance just what he is going to do about his Postmaster General [laughter and applause], but I like that thought of choosing from those who have grown up in the service [applause]. I don't mind telling you that that has been the policy of this administration in every branch of the Government, to call into greater responsibility the men who are trained in service. I am glad, however, that I persuaded Will Hays to become Postmaster General. [Applause.] There have been many great Postmasters General serving the United States, to whom it is a fine thing to be a successor. Most of them have had some knowledge of politics and Hays is not lacking in that qualification. [Laughter and applause.] I will not charge him with any great responsibility in bringing about my nomination, but he had a lot to do with the campaign which followed it, and since I say it when he is not present, I have no hesitancy in saying it when he is present, that in all that trying time he grew constantly in my confidence and regard. [Applause.] So, when I became President elect and was casting about for the official family I asked him to become one of the family, and I make the allusion in order to tell you what impelled him to come into the cabinet. In a confidential talk he said, "Senator"—then I had no other title—"I have an opportunity to progress and achieve most satisfactorily to me in a professional way, but I have been interested in this enterprise politically; our associations have been pleasant; if I can come into your family and make a record of service and real contribution to my country I will put aside the professional attainments to render the service you ask." [Applause.]

I believe he will have the satisfaction of that compensation, and, I like to say it to you servants of the Republic, that is the only compensation worth while. [Applause.]

I meet a good many people nowadays who are not averse to entering the public service [laughter], and there are many people whom I am rejoiced to recognize. I take it that we are not all of one party here to-night, and I am not averse to postmasters being interested in politics, I want you to know. [Applause.] If anybody ever comes to me and tells me that a man or woman is seeking a post-office appointment and has no party affiliations, he is going to be wiped off the list right then and there. [Applause.] I wouldn't give a rap for a



postmaster who is not interested in his Government as a participant in a political party. [Applause.] I would rather have a hard-boiled Democrat than an apologetic Republican. [Applause.] And when men come to me asking for a place in the Government service, and the first inquiry they make is the salary that goes with the appointment, that applicant is at once stricken off the list. [Applause.] No man is worth while who is merely seeking a place, but the man is worth while who seeks to render a service. [Applause.]

Maybe it will interest you—there is a popular impression throughout the land that Government employment carries with it large and generous compensation. There never was a more mistaken idea. There are some men measurably well compensated in the Government service. They are rare exceptions rather than the rule, and if this administration achieves the success that we hope for, for our country's good, a very large measure of it will be due to the activities of men who are impelled only by a desire to serve and who have put aside their private pursuits to serve their country and their fellow citizens, essentially without compensation. [Applause.] It would be an interesting story to tell you of the men now engaged in service who receive no salary whatsoever. I have known nothing so gratifying in all my experience as the manifest readiness of capable men to put aside their own properly selfish pursuits to come and serve the Republic in a day of great emergency. And there has been an emergency, fellow Americans. I do not speak now in a partisan sense; I do not speak in a sense of criticism of anything that has gone before, but our Republic, like the other great nations of the world, has emerged from a great trial that has put nations to the severest of tests, and it is no small problem to put our Republic squarely on its feet again and head it in the right direction, and it has called for the service of every man and woman in the Republic who is interested in the welfare of our common country. I know we are going to succeed. We may not reach the ideal state this year or next. It may not be reached in this administration, but as the Postmaster General said, the heart of America is right and we can not and will not fail. [Applause.]

You have been hearing a great deal about understanding. I have sought to preach the gospel of understanding. You have heard much about service, and I participate in preaching the gospel of service, and I venture to say to you that the greatest things we will record in the passing years of restoration and reconstruction are to come of understanding and service.

There has been some publicity lately—becoming publicity, let it be said—about the reduction of the cost of government. Most of that is coming through added efficiency of service on the one hand and understanding between governmental departments on the other hand.

If there is one criticism that may be properly uttered about our popular Government of the United States—probably of other Governments in the world—it is that under our development of separate departments they have had no thought of each other, and the one thing that is being achieved nowadays is bringing these departments into an understanding of the functions of each other and the necessity for their coordination in serving a common purpose. I will not venture to go into figures. The Postmaster General has already staggered us with figures that no one ever dreamed of. Well, I will not say quite that. I asked him a moment ago how many letters there were handled each day, and he sent me over a note saying there were 40,800,000. I looked at it a moment and I said, “I guess that is not as large as I thought it was.” I believe we get half that many every day at the White House [laughter], telling me how to conduct a conference on international affairs and to cure the ills of unemployment. [Laughter.] Which takes me back to another rather interesting illustration of the popular thought in our land.

I returned to my home town, in Ohio, last summer a year ago, after a certain political gathering which was held in the city of Chicago, and a dear old crossroads blacksmith, who had been my friend from boyhood, met me on the street one day, and he said, “Warren, I have been taking your paper for 32 years and have rather enjoyed reading it, and I am glad that you got the nomination for the Presidency. It will give you a chance to show people what you can do after you have been telling them for 32 years how to run the country.” [Laughter and applause.] While I smiled at this shaft, he looked at me rather pitifully, I thought, and he said, “Well, I guess they have got things adjusted now so it isn’t very much trouble to be President anyhow.” [Laughter.] That is the only mistake I ever knew him to make. [Laughter.]

Mr. Smith said—getting back to my theme—he thought men ought to be inspired to believe there was a chance for far greater accomplishment. I want that to be the gospel of America. If there is any one thing that has enabled this Republic to outstrip many another nation in the world, it is that ours is a land of opportunity. And I believe, as well, it is a land of reward, the greatest of which, always, is the consciousness of things done. But I want America to expand in this understanding, in this process of humanizing, in this added fraternity, ever to be a better place in which to aspire and achieve. If we can do that for our own people in the commitment to service and the determination to understand one another, it is not at all impossible, my countrymen, that this great Republic may point the world to the way of understanding and a better order for all mankind. [Applause.] And I hope that may be our fortune.



The Postmaster General has alluded to the forthcoming conference among great nations in this Capital City. There has been much discussion about the possibilities. There have been many errors as to its intent.

I venture to say I think I know you well; you have done more than merely perform the functions, the mechanical and business functions, of your offices; I have seen the postal forces of America in the hour of great crisis leading their several communities to the service of the Republic. I never will forget the service you rendered throughout our anxieties amid the World War. [Applause.] I know what you did, and it was a service impelled by loyalty and devotion to the Republic. [Applause.] I like, Senator Townsend, what you said about the necessity of serving only the American Government and its people. [Applause.] If this Government can not be fair to those who serve it, it fails. [Applause.] Sometimes it may be tardy, but the heart of the Republic is right, as we have said, and if we can be loyal in service to those in our own land and establish a better order here, we will only be loyal to God Almighty and our fellow men if we use our influence in committing the world to those things which we have found so helpful to us.

Let me say to you, ladies and gentlemen, you are just as big a part of this governmental machine as anybody here in Washington. Every man and every woman can play his or her part, and no one can do more, and, as Mr. Smith said a little while ago, if General Hays is the greatest Postmaster General of all time it will be because he has able assistants and the loyal devotion of these 300,000 or more who are serving in the Postal Department. [Applause.] I am glad you like Hays and his assistants. [Applause.] We are in accord about that. I will say to you he is a devoted general in command. Sometimes we think we will have to extend the period of cabinet meetings to give Hays time enough to boost the Post Office Department. [Laughter.] If you have confidence in General Hays, as you deserve to have, I can add to your confidence in your Government by saying to you that while they may vary in personality and their manifestations of interest, the head of every department of this Government of yours is giving the same energy, the same enthusiasm, the same thought, and the same devotion to his department, and when you have an administration like that we can scarcely fail to achieve measurably good results for this common country of ours. [Great applause.]



















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